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I Am Canadian

Immigration and Multiculturalism in the True North

Goddard, Joe

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Joe Goddard, Lektor,
Institut for kultur og globale studier, Aalborg Universitet.

I Am Canadian: Immigration and Multiculturalism in the True North?

Canada has been a land of immigration since the first European settlers arrived around 400 years ago. Then, the country's "first nations" (as Canada's founding indigenous peoples are called) numbered perhaps one million. First nations today account around for roughly the same number, yet the nation's total population is much larger, at around 34.3 million.^a Most settlers of modern Canada, therefore, stem from elsewhere, and in the main, arrived quite recently (see Table 1 for largest groups).

Table 1:

Self-Reported Ethnicity in Canada, 2006

Canadian	ca. 30%
English	ca. 20%
French	ca. 16%
Scottish	ca. 15%
Irish	ca. 14%
German	ca. 10%
Italian	ca. 4%
Chinese	ca. 4%
First Nations	ca. 4%
Ukrainian	ca. 4%
Scandinavian	ca. 4%
South Asian	ca. 4%
Black Canadians	ca. 2.5%

Source: Census Canada
(Includes multiple self-identification)

Indeed, Canada's immigration is quite remarkable in that its magnitude remains higher than many other settler societies. Approximately 250,000 immigrants make the country their home every year.^b This rate equates to that of the massive settlement by Europeans at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, so Canada's ethnic makeup, illustrated in the table above, is dynamic, to say the least (see Figure 1, below).

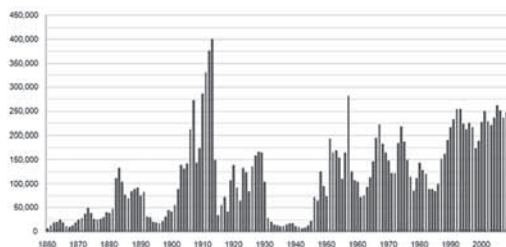
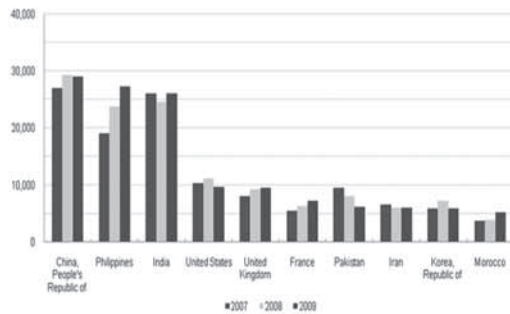


Figure 1: Immigration to Canada in raw numbers, 1860-2010

(source: citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2009 <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2009/permanent/index.asp>)

Up until the 1950s, immigration to Canada came overwhelmingly from European countries (UK) and the U.S., with little and restricted immigration from elsewhere. In 2007-9 most immigration came from Asia, notably from China, the Philippines, and the Indian subcontinent. (see Table 2)

**Table 2: Permanent Residents
by Source Area, 2007-2009**



(Source: CIC, op cit)

One important prism through which Canadian immigration policy can be seen is the relationship with its southern neighbor, the U.S. Since American independence in the 1770s, the two nations have exchanged populations, with each being one of the other's greatest sources of citizens; from the migration of Loyalists to Ontario and the Maritimes in the 1780s, to the outspreading of Quebecois into Northern New England and New York in the early twentieth century. Most times, however, Canadian emigration to the U.S. has surpassed immigration from the U.S. Recently, much has been made of the "Brain Drain" of highly qualified and successful Canadians heading south to the U.S.; including journalists (Charles Krauthammer, David Frum), towering public intellectuals (J.K. Galbraith, Michael Ignatieff); a governor (Jennifer Granholm in Michigan), not to mention almost the entire cast of the first *Star Trek* series (William Shatner as "Jim Kirk" and James Doohan as "Scottie").

Canadian society was bifurcated until the 1780s, with a growing and protected religious (Catholicism) and cultural (French) tradition in Quebec and along the Great Lakes, and an amalgam of first nations trading with both French and Anglo North America. The American Revolution ultimately "created" two states; the U.S., and Canada, as after the revolution thousands of refugees – British Empire Loyalists – flooded into Southern

Ontario and the Maritimes regions from the newly independent U.S., establishing and strengthening the third of Canada's three founding traditions. War with the U.S. in 1812, tension over boundaries in northern Maine and on the Pacific Coast, continuous sub-national antagonisms such as the Irish-minded Fenians, and a belief that the U.S. would come to control the whole of America north of the Rio Grande made "British" North Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability. Immigration came to be seen as essential in maintaining control above the 49th parallel and in developing commerce based on the territory's vast natural wealth, especially as U.S. population, production and power exploded.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Anglicans in Ontario and Catholics in Quebec held privileged positions, effectively as established churches and societies. However, increasing Protestant diversity, resentment over the restrictive hold that the Catholic Church had in Quebec, and frustration over unrepresentative governance helped fuel popular unrest which ultimately led to more open religious and political societies (1830-1867). Canada's two major political groupings parties, the Conservative (Anglican, traditional Catholic) and the Liberal (dissenting Protestants, and Quebecois agnostics) reflected sectarian difference. While Canadian immigration was less influenced by established churches and unrepresentative government from the 1860s, immigrants were increasingly categorized according to their supposed desirability, suitability, and innate abilities to deal with the Canadian geography and climate. Ideas of cultural difference and distance affected Canadian policy during the early twentieth century, reflected in immigration rules which were tightened from the 1920s. Favored immigrants included peoples of the British Isles and other northwest Europeans, while less-favored groups counted southern Europeans among their numbers. Undesirables included Asians and Blacks, labor radicals, leftists, the sick, and the sexually "deviant" thinkers. These groups were restricted or limited by head-taxes.

Many similarities emerged between the immigration policies and the timing of changes between the US and Canada, and between types of immigration and popular dissatisfaction: perhaps predictably so as Canada orientated itself southward to the U.S., rather than eastward to the U.K.

Breaking with forty years of restrictive policy which had sought to retain the ethnic origins of the nation, immigration policy was drastically altered from the 1960s and 1970s. Mass immigration resumed – now based on a mix of economic and social strength rather than country of origin. Milestones in the opening up of policy included the allowance of Dual Nationality in 1977, the enshrining of Multiculturalism in the constitution in 1982, and governmental planning to increase immigration by sixty percent to two-hundred and fifty thousand a year by 1992 (see Figure 2: Modern Milestones in Canadian Immigration Policy below). Again, it is worth drawing attention to the importance of the U.S. on Canadian immigration policy. From about 1970, and especially during the Trudeau era (1968-84), Canadians sought

for ways to differentiate themselves from their southern neighbors.^c Liberalism, tolerance, multiculturalism, pacifism, and an extensive social state came to form a civil credo which helped Canadians distinguish themselves from Americans – Canada *the good* rather than USA *the powerful*. Immigration and multiculturalism thus became emblems of pride and difference for many Canadians. And indeed Canadian exponents of immigration often prided themselves on the diversity-enhancing mosaic they were creating in contrast to the American melting pot.

**Figure 2: Modern Milestones
In Canadian Immigration Policy**

1967	Non Discriminatory Immigration introduced. Specifies objectives, obliges federal govt. to create plan for immigration
1971	Bilingualism and Multiculturalism are announced as federal government policies
1977	Citizenship Act. Dual nationalities permitted
1982	Multiculturalism specified in repatriated constitution
1990	Immigration targets rose to 250,000 annually
2002	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (coherence for integration)
2006	Lebanon Crisis Many thousand Canadians caught up by Israeli military action
2009	Restriction of Canadian Citizenship to children born abroad

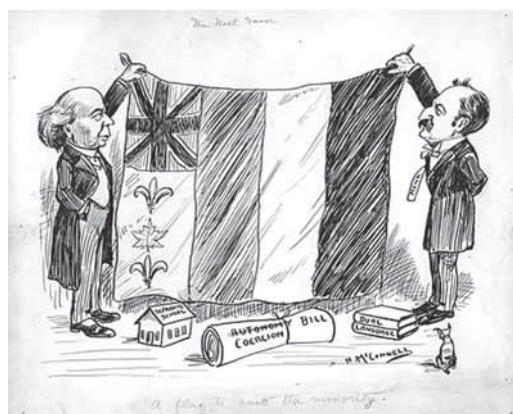
Yet all was not roses. While at one level intolerance of cultural or racial tolerance became anti-Canadian and thus largely unacceptable, on the other hand, attitudes didn't always follow policy. Canadian politicians recognized that their slow natural rate of population growth and skills

Foto: Lisbeth Busballe



shortages meant that Canada would benefit from mass immigration. Simultaneously many Canadians came to see an economically-optimal level of immigration as socially and culturally unacceptable. Moreover, Canada's impressive immigration was distributed unevenly across the country, and heavily concentrated on Toronto (absorbing near 45%), with Vancouver and Montreal following. In some senses, this was a clear recipe for aggravation of city-country differences, and the already unfamiliar cities became more cosmopolitan and thus foreign to a native population.

At this point we need to return to the ideas of founding Canadian myths. In 1867 through the Constitution Act Canada was formed of two fairly evenly balanced linguistic cultures; Anglophone and Francophone, see the Cartoon below. However, due to the expansion of national territory and the preferences of immigrants to settle in Anglophone Canada, the distribution and relationship between the two linguistic communities skewed. Currently perhaps 30% of Canada's population is francophone, while closer to 70% is Anglophone. The dynamics of immigration has upset the balance between two of the founding nations – to such an extent that immigration policy to Quebec was effectively repatriated from the federal government in 1991, to allow that society more control.



Cartoon: Early Bilingualism and Biculturalism: Compromise a necessity. Note the Union Jack, Tricolore, and Fleur-de-Lis.

In recent times, as has already been suggested, the founding myth has been widened to include the evident contribution of the aboriginal or First Nation population. Indeed, at a 2006 conference at Copenhagen Business School, the then Canadian Ambassador Mary Simon (herself part Inuit) could talk of the three founding nations: English, French and Native. In many ways, Simon's appointment buttressed Canada's multicultural status and confirmed the transnational fluidity of current borders for the peoples of the Arctic north in Canada and Denmark. But to return, the three foundational nations of the country underline that not only is Canada multicultural today; but it has been so since the peoples met after 1600. This is a re-reading of Canadian history, as Canada's immigration policies were blatantly prejudiced until the 1960s, biased in terms of politics, and prejudicial in terms of sexual orientation.

While Canada today is largely regarded as a fairly effective example of how immigration works in affluent and liberal states, a backlash has emerged. The anguish of the 9/11 terror attacks incited fear and suspicion, not least south of the world's longest unguarded border. Indeed many Americans fretted over the possibility of terrorists crossing from the north, and some Canadians correspondingly began to see recent immigrants in a more sinister light. Canada's southern border tightened as a consequence, with instances of people claiming that stereotyping – racial and ethnic profiling – was practiced at entry points to the U.S. These incidents arguably fed into and fed off strands of antipathy towards specific visible minorities (Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern origins) in Canada, and facilitated an atmosphere of suspicion. However, general hysteria and ill-will in North America (despite the protestations of then President George W. Bush) was to have a more specific manifestation in Canada.

During the summer of 2006, bombs reined on Beirut and southern Lebanon from Israeli planes and artillery, in response to missile attacks by He-

zbollah on Northern Israel. A major humanitarian tragedy unfolded, with severe destruction of Lebanese infrastructure and significant loss of life. In response to the growing dangers, many people fled from the fighting, with overseas passport holders seeking refuge abroad. The effect on Canada was as huge as it was unexpected: The left-liberal *Toronto Star* estimated that fifty thousand Canadian nationals were caught in the crossfire. Nearly fifteen thousand citizens demanded repatriation from the Canadian government: despite the majority being permanently resident and holding ancestral links there.^d

The Israeli-Lebanon crisis uncovered Canada's attitudes towards immigration and opened debates on the consequences of immigration. To be fair, already prior to the crisis some commentators questioned whether Canada's immigration policy could continue to work. Professor Andrew Cohen, writing in the *Toronto Star*, called Canada a "virtual country", "Hotel Canada," and as a "hol-

low country" in an essay on Canada's near future.^e Daniel Stoffman, also writing for the *Toronto Star*, wondered over immigration's role in environmental attrition, as eager new citizens landed. To improve social, economic, and environmental conditions, Stoffmann argued, Canada needed to return to its pre-1992 more moderate immigration levels (150,000 new arrivals a year).^f The Lebanon crisis suggested that some people saw their Canadian identities as insurance policies, and indeed, that many citizens were uninterested in permanent residence.

In response to the critiques of offshore Canadians, a *Toronto Star* editorial argued staunchly in its headline, that "Dual citizens all [are] equally Canadians," noting that aid and support for people with two passports was necessary in a globalizing world as "Canada is desperate for skilled and educated immigrants to keep our economy humming."^g Two days later, the same newspaper celebrated the fleeing citizens as the contempo-

Foto Peter Bakker





Foto: Lisbeth Beshalle

rary heirs of nineteenth century Irish and others.^h As the saga continued, Statistics Canada sought to estimate downwards the numbers of Lebanese-Canadian nationals in Lebanon (the community numbers some 140,000 Christian and Muslims in all) to less than fifty thousand.

While many back home watched the Canadian repatriation effort with a measure of bemusement and pride – bemusement over the numbers of stuck Canucks, pride over the logistical support given by the government, some voices on both sides of the world wondered whether Canada had done too little too late to protect its citizens. In the spinning of the evacuation yarn, Prime Minister Stephen Harper – who was in Europe on official business – commanded his Prime Ministerial jet towards Cyprus to help pick up refugees. The Premier's actions – a pretty transparent publicity stunt involving predictable photo-ops – aimed to relieve the domestic pressure on

the government for its purported sloth in getting Canadians out.

Maclean's weekly newsmagazine tried to report both sides of the story, quoting worried Montrealer Youssef Hariri who was anxious about his sister in Baalbec, Lebanon. Hariri alleged that "If there is no help (from Canada)there will be a humanitarian crisis," before comparing Canadian efforts unfavorably to the French. Humanitarian concerns were legitimate: some Canadians lost their lives in the 2006 bombardment of Lebanon. Others praised Canada's concerted and timely action. Bernard Chucuri, on being speedily repatriated, exclaimed "I can't say enough thanks....They are trying their best to get every Canadian out of here."ⁱ

Terence Corcoran, in the rightist *National Post*, took issue with the supposed magnitude of repatriates, asking "Since when has a 'fast exit' been a



Canadian Citizenship Ceremony held by Governor-General the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean (not in shot) in Ottawa, 2007.

right?" Zeroing in on the purported divided loyalties of dual citizens, Corcoran surmised that some people could think: "Let's see. If there's war in Lebanon, then today I'm a Canadian."ⁱ Corcoran argued that Canadian moral obligations towards her (dual) nationals had been trumpeted in the liberal press, not least in the centrist *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. Neo-conservative Mark Steyn, reporting for *Macleans*, struck a similar chord, noting that "The scandal isn't about tawdry evacuation; it's that we've fostered so many indifferent citizens." Steyn argued – with more than a grain of accuracy – that "Canadian seemed to be everybody's second nationality," a citizenship concept which was "a fallback position, something to have in the back pocket when the powder keg goes off."^k Steyn articulates latent critiques of Canada, that potential citizens want the passport, but are lukewarm about the country, and of its muscular immigration policy which, perhaps, is less of a success than many would like to believe.

Canada's beacon-like draw is diminished in this reading. In terms of language, few people would have a problem with Danish-Canadian. But Canadian-Danish, or Canadian-British? It seems the hyphen is unidirectional, and, reflexively, that the Canadian side of identity is secondary.

Then again, introspection over what it means to be Canadian is nothing new. For much of the twentieth century politicians and others argued over whether "Canadianness" could safely contain two or more identities. Speaking in March 1958, and pleading for an unitary Canadian identity, Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker famously remarked that he was "determined to bring about a Canadian citizenship that knew no hyphenated consideration," whereas a decade or so later Liberals under Pierre Trudeau claimed unity through multicultural diversity. Eminent Canadian historian J.L. Granatstein, writing in the 2006 refugee aftermath, mused over the coun-

tries' overlapping, refracted, and transnational identities. Granatstein trained his analysis on identity issues through the outflow from Lebanon and noted that many of the country's putative citizens rescued "had lived in Lebanon for decades." In this whirl of citizen's settlement preferences and potential governmental policy responses Granatstein mused over what, precisely, Canadian citizenship could or should mean in a globalized world.¹

As the crisis ebbed out, the political and opinion fallout continued to spread: Garth Turner, then-Independent MP, asked of the repatriates, "If they don't live here, and they don't pay taxes, and may never be coming back, what is the responsibility of the government of Canada supported by the Canadian taxpayer?" As a result, think tanks and the like began to explore ways of encouraging enhanced allegiances to Canada and reducing the amount of people using the Canadian "passport package" as a lifeline. Suggestions included much higher passport renewal costs for non-residents, eliminating dual citizenship, and reducing overseas residents' access to subsidized further education. By so doing "free riders" would cost Canadian taxpayers less, as well as enhancing a link between citizenship and civic pride.²

Garth struck a populist chord with middle-class suburban Canadians who wanted to believe that some immigrants – or "dualies" as they became known wanted to "be" us without being "us." The estimated \$CAN 85 million to the taxpayer played in, aggravating "either-or" conceptions of nationality which clashed with "and" which transcended single identities. Racism was perhaps also present: writing in *Maclean's*, Luiza Savage pointed out that many white Canadians were also "dualies" without this seeming a problem, including ninety thousand British citizens. Canadian identity had for Savage never been as definitively and oppositionally-formed as the American (in the revolutionary crucible), while the swirling and mixing identities actually helped foster a gradual acquisition of Canadian values.³ The key re-



Foto: Anne Lie Schneider

mained in the integration process, meeting with open minds and the acceptance of a metaphorical "mosaic" or "tapestry" (each ethnicity a thread in a larger picture) approach to identity and avoiding complacency. Political scientist Norman Hillmer – interviewed on the *CTV.ca* website, warned that complacency towards inclusiveness could soon lead to internal struggle, disagreement and backlash.⁴ Before the 2008 recession Canada's relatively robust economy meant rising wages for skilled people and occasionally massive recruitment problems for contractors – despite a quarter of a million arrivals a year.

Canadian Census data suggests that an elemental self-reported identity of Canadianness actually declined during the new millennium. In 2001, thirty-nine percent of Canadians self-identified as Canadian rather than any other ethno-national group. By 2006, this number had fallen, actually by nearly a fifth, to thirty-two percent.⁵ There are at least two major ways of seeing this greater diversity. An optimist could claim that Canada's unique, liberal and evolving construction allows its citizens the freedom for them to see themselves in diverse terms, rather than coercing them to accept that their basic nature be assimilated. The more pessimistically-minded could point to a turn towards ethnicity as a fundamental marker of identity which trumps allegiance to a political credo, and indeed might argue that Canada's immigration rates of around 0.8% of total popula-

tion a year are likely feeding differentiation. Indeed, for the right, this differentiation, labeled “social experimentation” seems deliberate.⁴

Fictional “Joe Canuck Sixpack” created as an advertising ploy by Molson brewers, although obviously male and white, let loose a diatribe in a commercial which touched a chord with many Canadians. Sixpack tried to define what made Canadians different from Americans below the border, the basic oppositional of Canadian identity thus: “I am Canadian.... I have a prime minister, not a president: I speak English and French, not American.... I can proudly sew my country’s flag on my backpack. I believe in peacekeeping, not policing; diversity, not assimilation.” This is the alluring self-image of the friendly giant: moral, accepting, understanding, and *Definitely Not American*. Yet the white middle class Canadians whom Sixpack spoke to and for seemed likely to dwindle in relative standing as Canada became increasingly diverse in complexion and attitudes – thanks to immigration-fuelled population growth.⁵

That is not where Canada’s unfolding story as immigration destination ends, however. Of the one-quarter of a million people who enter the country as new residents every year, around two-thirds (170,000) seek Canadian citizenship, for which they are eligible after three years of residence in Canada. Citizenship criteria include knowledge of English or French, and successful completion of a citizenship test. Processing applicants’ paperwork currently takes around 19 months. If the application is successful, the applicant is then required to take an oath of citizenship, with the oath either taken on the religious book chosen by the applicant or as an affirmation for the non-religiously minded.⁶ This public act of allegiance confirms the applicant as a full-member of the Canadian polity. Following the ceremony, the newly-minted citizen is issued with certification of citizenship. Thus the entire process can be accommodated in a little more than five years. As can be seen from Photograph 1, the citizenship ceremony is often understood as a celebration: of *unity and diversity*.

Noter

- a See the *Statistics Canada* starting webpage at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>.
 - b See *Citizenship and Immigration Canada* News Release: Government of Canada Tables 2010 Immigration Plan <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2009/2009-10-30.asp>.
 - c Pierre Trudeau served as Canada’s Prime Minister during most of this period.
 - d See Editorial “Dual Citizens all Equally Canadian,” in the *Toronto Star* July 21, 2006.
 - e See Andrew Cohen, “A Virtual Country,” in the *Toronto Star*, July 5, 2006.
 - f See Daniel Stoffman, “When Immigration Goes Awry,” in the *Toronto Star*, July 14, 2006.
 - g See Editorial, op cit.
 - h Andrew Chung, “A Painful Constant through History,” in the *Toronto Star*, July 23, 2006.
 - i Michael Friscolanti & Danylo Hawaleskhan, “The Long Road Home,” in *Macleans* Magazine, July 31, 2006.
 - j Terence Corcoran, “Since When Has a Fast Exit Been a Right,” in the *National Post*, July 20, 2006.
 - k Mark Steyn, “50,000 Problematic Canadians,” in *Macleans*, August 1, 2006.
 - l J.L.Granatstein, “Conflicted over Citizenship,” in *Globe and Mail*, July 31, 2006.
 - m John Chant, “Background: The Passport Package. Rethinking the Citizenship Benefits of Non-Resident Canadians,” *The C.D. Howe Institute*, No. 99, 2006.
 - n Luiza Savage, “O Canada, Do We Stand on Guard for Thee?” *Macleans*, August 7, 2006.
 - o Mary Nersessian, “Canada: Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants,” in *CTV/CA*, October 10, 2006.
 - p Toby Cohen, “Canadian Ethnicity Popular,” *Toronto Star*, April 2, 2008.
 - q George Jonas, “Trudeau’s Cultural ‘Mosaic’ a Failed Social Experiment,” *National Post* Sept 20, 2011.
 - r Ibid.
 - s Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “How to Become a Canadian Citizen,” online at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizenship/index.asp>.
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